



## Quarterly Letters

Dear Editor:

I would like to comment on the article “Nurse Staffing and Work Status in Medical, Surgical and Obstetrical Units in Ontario Teaching Hospitals” (McGillis-Hall et al. Vol. 5 No. 4 p 64–69). I think this very interesting study provides important information that, when combined with the magnet hospital literature that we have been reading, cannot be ignored.

It is concerning that almost half of the respondents in the study were less than five years in their unit (45.5 % or 475 nurses) and many of those were within their first two years of employment (25.5 % or 285 nurses). This is not good because first, as the authors point out, it is telling us that nurses are not staying long enough to gain expert clinician status, a problem in the face of increasing acuity and complexity. Second, and of equal importance, nurses are therefore deprived of the satisfaction that is inherent in applying/sharing expert nursing knowledge. These are the kind of experiences that grow a passion for the nursing profession and are necessary in order to secure its future.

I think also that teaching hospitals need to decide on retention strategies aside from, and in addition to, the mainstream suggestions. That is to say, we need a response to comments like “Why should I, who lives away from the downtown area, work in a busy academic centre when I can work closer to where I live?” And I don’t mean a verbal response only, could lip service be the goddess of collaboration? I think nurses need to have tangible opportunities related to the academic activities that are going on around them in teaching hospitals, in virtue of which they can then say “This is why I choose to work in an academic centre. These are the advantages for me!”

Thank you.

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